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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR NOVEMBER 30, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for November 30, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: The daily reported that the arrest of the military officers was welcomed by the public and expectations were that the government would further unveil news about the Semdinli incident following the arrest of the officers. Separately, Ozgur Gundem reported that the people of Semdinli reacted against the remarks of PM Erdogan, which reportedly cast doubts about the credibility of Semdinli people as witnesses for the Semdinli case since "Semdinli people were under the threat of the PKK".

RADIKAL / ZAMAN: The prosecutor demanded the arrest of two officers on grounds that the officers 'committed crimes against the public, established an unlawful organization, and planned action to kill people.' The judge of Van's Heavy Penalty Court, however, arrested the officers on charges that they 'attempted to destroy the state's unity and nation's solidarity', as well. This development marks the first time that the judiciary has been willing to bring action against military officers for being involved in 'separatist activity.' The officers may reportedly face life in prison under these charges.

RADIKAL: In the ninth day of the diarrhea epidemic seen in Malatya (see press summary 11/29), in which nearly 6000 people contracted the disease, a doctor said on the condition of anonymity that the municipality had been warned many times in the last two months about the city's contaminated potable waters because of an increased number of patients suffering from the same symptoms. However, the municipality reportedly did not heed the warnings and kept telling the public that the city water was clean.

EKSPRES: Ekspres daily continues to report on an alleged fraud scandal concerning the issuing of false construction certificates in the Yuregir Municipality in Adana (see press summary 11/29). Previous Mayor Ahmet Unal dismissed claims that he was involved in such fraud. The daily reported rumors circulating about a municipality official attempting to retrieve the false certificates from the people.

RADIKAL / EVRENSEL: An investigation has been filed against Selahattin Demirtas, Chairperson of the Diyarbakir Human Rights Association, who allegedly made statements to Roj TV about terrorist leader Abdullah Ocalan. The number of investigations opened against Demirtas reportedly increased to 62.

EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: A former CHP (Republican People's Party) deputy will call for an action against Commander Faruk Comert who the deputy blames for allegedly allowing F-16 aircraft to fly low over a funeral ceremony in Yuksekova.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Cavit Torun, Diyarbakir AKP deputy and Parliamentary Human Rights Investigation Committee member, urged authorities to shed light on alleged other people that Jandarma Chief Sergeant Ali Kaya, who was recently arrested, has connections with.

OZGUR GUNDEM: NGOs in Mersin demanded that counter-guerillas and JIT (Jandarma Intelligence) be abolished so that more light could be shed light on the Semdinli incident.

OZGUR GUNDEM: As a result of a confrontation between police officers and alleged burglars, one of the reported burglars was killed by a police officer in Reyhanli district of Hatay. 12 people were detained.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Joost Lagendijk, European Parliament (EP) member and Co-Chairperson of the Joint EP-Turkish Parliamentary Commission, reportedly said that the (Turkish) Army was provoking people and aiming to draw PKK into committing violence. According to Lagendijk, the Kurds should back the (Turkish) government in its attempt to unveil the Semdinli incident.

OZGUR GUNDEM: SES (Union of Health Workers) drew attention to the insufficient services provided by hospitals in Diyarbakir. The hospitals in Diyarbakir reportedly lack the means to provide essential health care services to the people, according to a report generated by SES.

RADIKAL: Deputy Security Director of Mersin dismissed claims that the police gave gum and foot-balls to a group of children as gifts when they confronted another group of nearly 200 children as they were allegedly chanting pro-PKK slogans (see press summary 11/29). The deputy director said that the terrorists were in the habit of using children and women to support their actions.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

DUNYA: Exports to Syria and Middle East will reportedly be shipped faster after completion of the railway rebuilding work between Islahiye of Turkey and Meydan-? Ekbez of Syria at the end of November 2005. Hasan Koprulu, the Director of the sixth region of TCDD (Turkish State Railways), said that the work, which runs 40 kms along the Turkish-Syrian border, started on the 15th of November. Pointing out that the directorate covers eleven cities, and railway net stretching from Konya to Mardin runs through several cities which are important in terms of commerce and industry; Koprulu reports that they have been in a period of "rebuilding" because the railway net used for long years was old and below standards. He adds that they have been rebuilding the net under international standards in which the 40 kms long work along the Turkish-Syrian border is covered as well. Koprulu reports that trains, which can travel at 40 kmph currently, will be able to travel at 95 kmph after completion of the work; then, exports to Syria and Middle East will be able to be shipped faster and safer.

12. HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul, who came to Gaziantep to attend a series of ground breaking and opening ceremonies, paid a visit to the Organized Industrial Zone in Gaziantep and facilities of a company called SANKO, as well.

13. SABAH (GUNEY): Antakya Chamber of Commerce in Hatay and Gaziantep Chamber of Industry expressed a joint effort to solve the common industrial problems the two provinces have.

14. SABAH (GUNEY) / BOLGE: The 2nd Cukurova Construction and Building Materials Fair, which will be held in Adana between March 23 and 27, 2006, will be organized by Start Fair; a reported Adana company specialized in organizing fairs.

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